

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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USIA-15 SAM-01 SAB-01 IO-11 AID-05 TRSE-00 MC-02

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 414

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, US

SUBJECT: RABIN ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUES

REF: TEL AVIV 1423

BEGIN SUMMARY: RABIN, SPEAKING IN CLOSED SESSION OF
LABOR ALIGNMENT EXECUTIVE AND IN THE KNESSET PLENUM MARCH 1,
DISCUSSED CURRENT MIDDLE EAST ISSUES INCLUDING A) SADAT'S
KUWAIT PRESS CONFERENCE, B) "SENIOR SOURCE" WARNING
REGARDING POSSIBILITY OF A SYRIAN-INITIATED WAR IN 1976,
C) JORDANIAN REJECTION OF TRIPARTITE SYRIAN/PLO/JORDANIAN
UNION, D) ISRAELI/U.S. DISCUSSIONS ON END OF WAR FORMULA,
AND E) U.S. ARMS SUPPLIES TO SAUDIA ARABIA. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO ISRAELI PRESS, PRIME MINISTER RABIN MADE
THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS IN A CLOSED SESSION OF THE
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LABOR ALIGNMENT EXECUTIVE.

2. SADAT'S KUWAIT PRESS CONFERENCE. RABIN CHARACTERIZED SADAT'S STATEMENT THAT EGYPT WILL NOT FEEL OBLIGED TO COME TO SYRIA'S ASSISTANCE IF THE LATTER STARTS A WAR AGAINST ISRAEL AS AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENT FOR ISRAEL. THE ISRAELI MEDIA HAD PAID INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO SADAT'S KUWAIT REMARKS WHEREAS, HAD SADAT SAID THE OPPOSITE, IT IN ALL LIKELIHOOD WOULD HAVE PROVIDED FAR GREATER COVERAGE. SADAT'S STATEMENTS SHOULD NOT LEAD ISRAEL TO NEGLECT PREPARING FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF WAR BUT NONETHELESS THEY ARE OF CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE. ISRAELIS, RABIN ADDED, HAD BECOME USED TO EMPHASIZING THE NEGATIVE AND NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS OF SINAI II AND DEVELOPMENTS IN ITS WAKE.

3. SENIOR SOURCE WARNING TO SYRIA. RABIN SAID THAT THE "SENIOR SOURCE" WARNING REGARDING SYRIA (REFTEL) WAS APPROPRIATE SINCE THAT COUNTRY HAD BEGUN TO TAKE CERTAIN STEPS WHICH CREATED THE SUSPICION THAT IT MAY LOSE CONTROL OF THE DEVELOPING SITUATION. RABIN RECALLED THAT NASSER IN JUNE 1967 HAD NOT INTENDED TO START A WAR BUT THAT HIS ACTIONS SET IN MOTION A CHAIN OF EVENTS OVER WHICH HE LOST CONTROL.

4. JORDANIAN REJECTION OF TRIPARTITE ISSUE. RABIN SAID THAT ISRAEL HAD INFORMATION ABOUT SYRIAN EFFORT TO CREATE A SYRIAN/JORDANIAN/PLO UNION. JORDANIAN REJECTION OF THIS INITIATIVE PROVED THE VALIDITY OF THE ISRAELI POSITION ON THE PLO AND ITS REFUSAL TO COUNTENANCE A THIRD STATE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JORDAN.

5. U.S./ISRAELI EXPLORATION OF END OF WAR FORMULA. RABIN SAID THAT THE U.S. HAD SUGGESTED THE IDEA OF AND END-OF-THE-STATE-OF-WAR NEGOTIATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO GENEVA UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. THIS WAS BECAUSE THE PLO COULD NOT BE KEPT OUT OF GENEVA AS LONG AS RUSSIA, AS CO-CHAIRMAN, INSISTED ON ARAFAT BEING THERE. RABIN SAID HE HAD AGREED IN WASHINGTON, WITHOUT HESITATION, THAT THE NEW AMERICAN IDEA BE UNCLASSIFIED

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PROBED WITH SYRIA AND EGYPT. HOWEVER, AS REGARDS JORDAN, HE HAD TOLD DR. KISSINGER HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WITH THE CABINET FIRST. KISSINGER HAD BEEN ANNOYED THAT THE PROPOSAL GOT PUBLICITY BEFORE ISRAEL GAVE ITS FORMAL AGREEMENT, RABIN SAID, BECAUSE THIS AT ONCE PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON EGYPT AND COMPELLED IT TO TAKE A STAND ON END-OF-STATE-OF-WAR, WHICH WAS NOT HELPFUL.

6. RABIN RECALLED THAT DR. KISSINGER ONCE SUGGESTED TO PRIME MINISTER GOLDA MEIR THAT ISRAEL FORMALLY WAIVE ITS CLAIM TO ANY SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE ENTIRE SINAI PENINSULA WEST OF THE 1967 BORDERS, IN RETURN FOR AN ARRANGEMENT TO STATION ISRAELI TROOPS IN SINAI.

7. U.S. ARMS SUPPLIES TO SAUDI ARABIA. ACCORDING TO PRESS, RABIN MADE FOLLOWING POINTS IN KNESSET PLENUM (OFFICIAL TEXT UNAVAILABLE.) ISRAEL OBJECTS AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE OF THE ARAB STATES BEING SUPPLIED WITH WEAPONRY WHICH IS LIKELY TO BE BROUGHT TO BEAR AGAINST IT IN THE EVENT OF WAR. ISRAEL WAS COMPELLED TO TAKE THE SAUDI DEAL INTO ACCOUNT IN ITS MILITARY CALCULATIONS EVEN THOUGH THE AMOUNTS INVOLVED WERE AS YET SMALL, COMPARED WITH THE STRENGTH OF EGYPT, SYRIA AND JORDAN. AFTER THE YOM KIPPUR WAR OF OCTOBER 1973, RIYADH DECIDED TO MODERNIZE ITS ARMY AND BUILD UP ITS MILITARY MIGHT, INVITING A U.S. MILITARY SURVEY MISSION TO ADVISE ON THE BEST PLAN. THE U.S. MISSION WAS FOLLOWED BY A DEAL TOTALLING \$1,250 MILLION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, WHEREBY \$900 MILLION WOULD BE SPENT ON THE MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING NAVAL HARBORS, AND THE REMAINING \$350 MILLION ON WEAPONS, INCLUDING 150 TANKS AND 1,000 ARMORED TROOP CARRIERS. BY COMPARISON WITH THE PAST, HE SAID, SAUDI ARABIA'S STRENGTH WOULD BE GREATLY INCREASED. ISRAEL HAD TO ASSUME THAT WHATEVER ARMS COULD BE SHIFTED WOULD BE USED AGAINST ISRAEL IF WAR BROKE OUT. EVEN TODAY, RIYADH KEEPS ONE BRIGADE IN SYRIA AND ANOTHER IN JORDAN. THESE TWO BRIGADES, AT LEAST, WOULD MOST LIKELY BE IN THE FRONT LINE, AND THERE COULD BE MORE. SAUDI MILITARY ACTIVITY WAS ALSO POSSIBLE ALONG THE RED SEA AND THE EASTERN SHORES OF

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THE SINAI PENINSULA, HE WARNED.

8. ISRAEL HAD AIRD ITS OBJECTIONS TO U.S. ARMS SALES TO RIYADH IN HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS WITH THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND AMONG OTHER CIRCLES IN THE U.S., BUT THERE WAS NO ASSURANCE THAT SUCH OBJECTIONS WOULD BEAR FRUIT. EVEN THOUGH JORDAN USED AMERICAN WEAPONS AGAINST ISRAEL IN THE YOM KIPPUR WAR ON THE SYRIAN FRONT, ISRAEL HAD BEEN UNABLE TO PREVENT FURTHER ARMS SALES TO JORDAN.

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